

## **CLAIMS**

1. A method of routing a contact in a network comprising a plurality of contact centres, said method comprising the steps of:-

5 (i) receiving a contact at one of the contact centres, said contact centre being a source contact centre;

(ii) sending a reservation request from the source contact centre to each of the contact centres, said reservation request being for an agent with a specified relative intrinsic value;

10 (iii) for one or more of the reservation requests, receiving at the source contact centre, a value of the specified intrinsic and an associated agent identifier;

(iv) routing the received contact to one of the agents on the basis of the received intrinsic.

15 2. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said specified intrinsic is selected from nodal longest idle agent, average answer delay and calls queued count.

3. A method of routing a contact in a network comprising a plurality of contact centres, said method comprising the steps of:-

20 (i) receiving a contact at one of the contact centres, said contact centre being a source contact centre;

(ii) sending a reservation request from the source contact centre to each of the contact centres, said reservation request being for a nodal longest idle agent;

25 (iii) for one or more of the reservation requests, receiving at the source contact centre, a nodal longest idle time and associated agent identifier;

(iv) routing the received contact to the agent with the longest of all the received nodal longest idle times.

4. A method as claimed in claim 1 which further comprises the step of (v) cancelling unused reservations.
5. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said contact is received at any one of the contact centres.
- 5 6. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said step (iii) of receiving at the source contact centre is carried out in a pre-specified time interval.
7. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said contact is associated with a specified network skillset and wherein said reservations requests are also for agents of that specified skillset.  
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8. A method as claimed in claim 3 which further comprises determining at the source contact centre a network longest idle agent.
9. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said step (ii) of sending a reservation request comprises sending that reservation request to the source contact centre itself.  
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10. A contact centre suitable for use in a network of contact centres, said contact centre comprising:
  - (i) an input arranged to receive a contact;
  - 20 (ii) an output arranged to send a reservation request to one or more contact centres in the network of contact centres, said reservation request being for an agent with a specified relative intrinsic value;
  - (iii) a second input arranged to receive, for one or more of the reservation requests, a value of the specified intrinsic and an associated agent identifier;  
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  - (iv) a processor arranged to route the contact to one of the agents on the basis of the received intrinsic.

11. A contact centre suitable for use in a network of contact centres, said contact centre comprising:

- (i) an input arranged to receive a contact;
- (ii) an output arranged to send a reservation request to one or more contact centres in the network of contact centres, said reservation request being for a nodal longest idle agent;
- (iii) a second input arranged to receive, for one or more of the reservation requests, a nodal longest idle time and associated agent identifier;
- (iv) a processor arranged to route the contact to the agent with the longest of all the received nodal longest idle times.

12. A communications network comprising a plurality of contact centres each as claimed in claim 10.

13. A communications network as claimed in claim 12 wherein each of said contact centres comprises a contact centre server and a switch.

14. A communications network as claimed in claim 13 said contact centre servers being linked to one another by a first part of said communications network and said switches being linked to one another by a second part of said communications network, said first and second parts being substantially isolated from one another.

15. A communications network as claimed in claim 13 wherein each contact centre server is connected to its associated switch using a dedicated embedded local area network connection.